



United States Department of Agriculture



NRCS Technical Assistance and Financial Assistance Resources



Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

nrcs.usda.gov/

NRCS – Who we are

NRCS works with farmers, ranchers, tribes, woodland owners, communities and other individuals and groups to conserve water, soil, wildlife habitat and other natural resources.

Working with landowners and partners, we identify natural resource concerns and develop unique and innovative conservation plans to address these issues.

NRCS financial and technical assistance Farm Bill programs are entirely voluntary.



▶ NRCS works directly with farmers to conserve our nation's natural resources.



NRCS Assistance

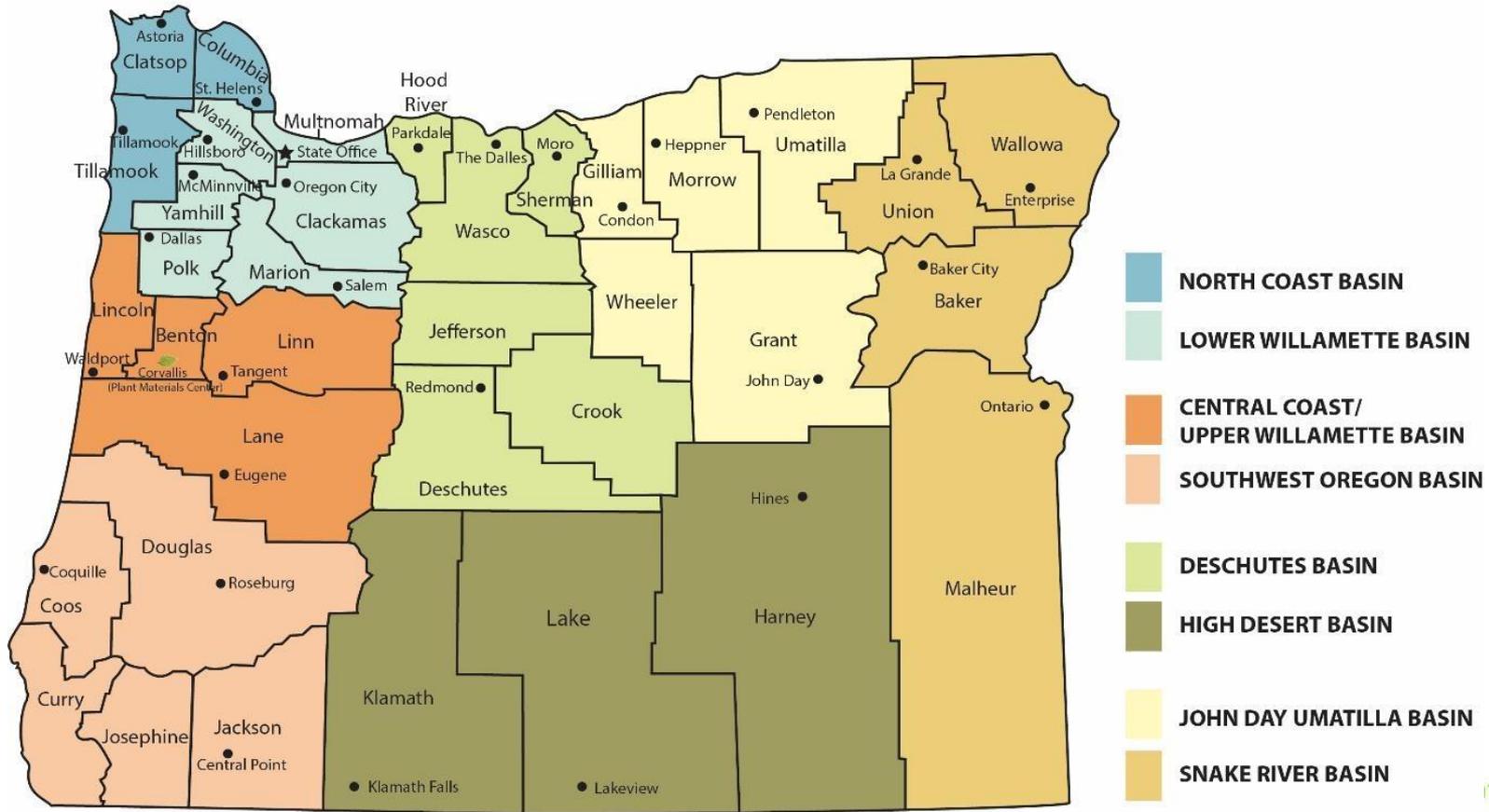


Technical Assistance: NRCS conservationists, through our conservation technical assistance program, provide science-based information to farmers, ranchers, and woodland owners in order to help identify and solve natural resource problems on privately owned working lands. Often, the result of this process is a record of decision called a Conservation Plan, which contains a suite of conservation practices selected to address the identified problem(s).

Financial Assistance: NRCS provides financial assistance to eligible landowners who choose to apply for and are selected for program funding. Financial assistance provides funding to landowners to assist with the implementation of conservation practices from their conservation plan that are included in conservation program contracts.



NRCS Oregon Service Centers



atural
sources
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<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/or/contact/local/>

[nrcs.usda.gov/](https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/)



The GOAL is to enhance our capacity:

To invest strategically to solve natural resource problems and be more effective, efficient, and accountable for staffing, funding and partnerships.

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Locally Led Process

Includes all Natural Resource Stakeholders
Utilizing Conservation Partners

Field Office Long Range Natural Resources Plan

Includes prioritized order for addressing
natural resource problems

Conservation Implementation Strategy

Specific problem and focus
area of interest

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Specific problem and focus
area of interest

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NRCS Financial Assistance Programs

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program**
 - Conservation Implementation Strategies (OR Initiatives)
 - Organic, High Tunnel, On-Farm Energy (National Initiatives)
 - Source Water Protection
 - NWQI (National Initiative in coordination with EPA)
 - WaterSmart (National initiative in coordination with BOR)
- **EOF Monitoring**
- **Conservation Innovation Grants**
 - Classic
 - On-farm
 - Alternative funding
- **Regional Conservation Partnership Program**
- **PL-566 – Watershed Operations**



Environmental Quality Incentives Program

EQIP provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits, such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat.



Accessing Environmental Quality Incentives Program funding

- EQIP is a continuous sign-up program. Applications may be submitted at any time. However, specific application cutoff dates are set for each funding cycle. Applications received after an application deadline will be deferred until the next funding period.
 - Contact your local NRCS office for current cutoff dates, funding opportunities, and application materials.
 - Oregon's second EQIP application cutoff was April 16, 2021.
- Both the land and the applicant must be "EQIP-eligible."
- Applicants must establish (or update) farm records with their local Farm Services Agency office.
- Applicants must comply with Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Compliance provisions.





Here's what you need to know.

So you're ready to make some improvements on your land, but you're not sure where to start? The **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service** may be able to help. NRCS works with farmers, ranchers, tribes and other individuals just like yourself interested in conserving the soil, water and other natural resources on their land.

We help you identify natural resource concerns and develop a conservation plan to address these

issues. Funds to implement these plans are made available through voluntary Farm Bill Programs that help diffuse the cost of implementation.

Still Interested? That's great! Below are a few things to think about before applying to NRCS for financial assistance programs.

Can you answer YES to all the following questions?

If so, then you and your land are eligible to participate in NRCS financial assistance programs.

PRODUCER ELIGIBILITY	YES NO		LAND ELIGIBILITY	YES NO	
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
1. Do you have a social security number or employer identification number issued by the IRS?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	1. Is your land in agriculture, such as cropland, rangeland, grassland, pasture or non-industrial private forest land?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Can you prove that you have control of your land for the entire span of the proposed NRCS contract? Most programs require a three-to-five year contract. Proof of land control can be a deed, a lease, or another form of evidence of land ownership/control.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2. Is your land in compliance with Highly Erodible Land and wetland conservation provisions? (If you don't know, check with your local USDA Service Center).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Is your adjusted gross income less than \$900,000?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3. If the work you want to do with NRCS involves water, can you prove your water right (may be exceptions for livestock)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Do you have signature authority or power of attorney to make management decisions on the land? If not, can you obtain written permission from the landowner?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	4. Do you have an interest in the agricultural or forestry operation on your land?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
			5. If you irrigate, can you provide documentation showing your irrigation history?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

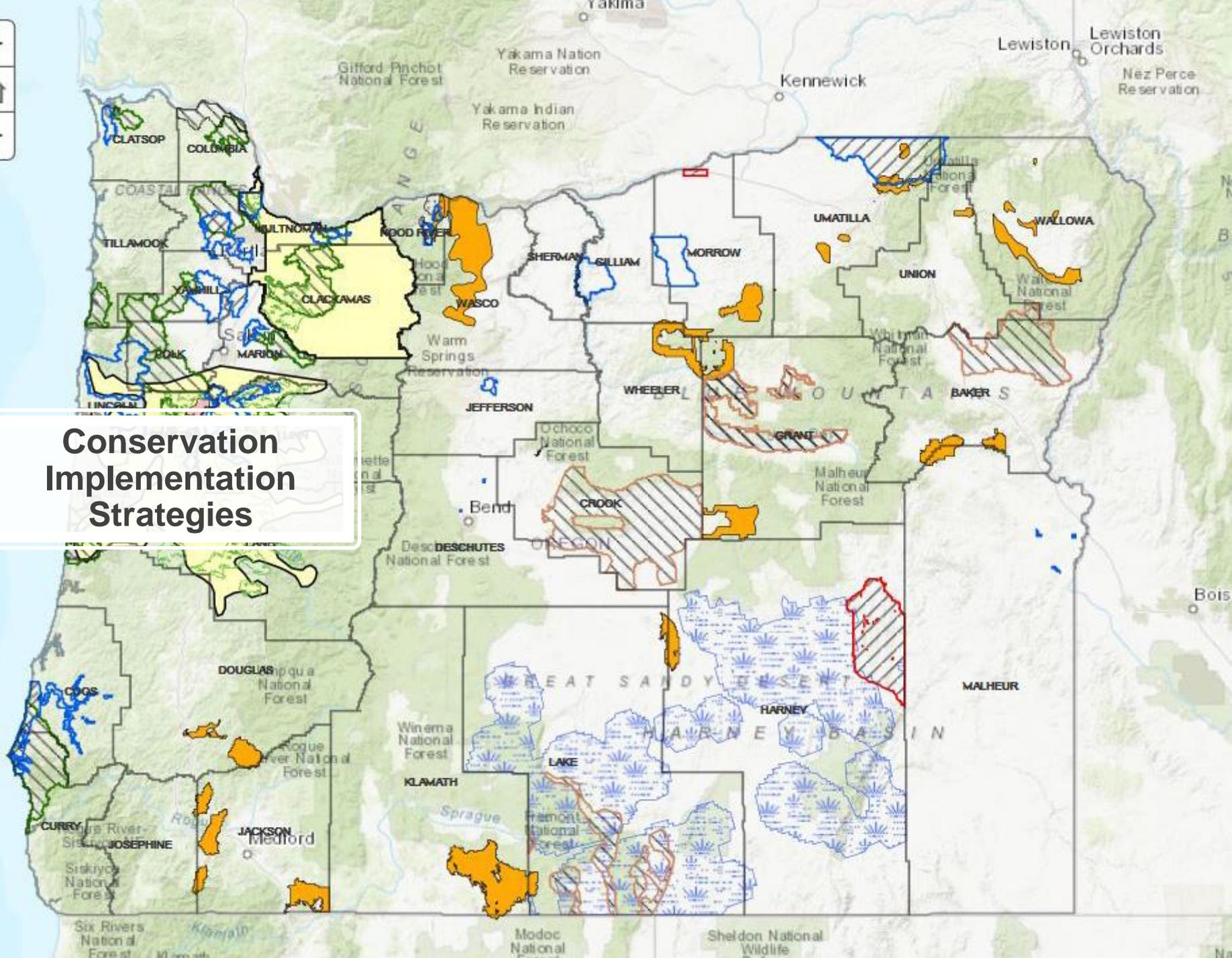


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Conservation Implementation Strategies



National Water Quality Initiative

The National Water Quality Initiative is a partnership among NRCS, state water quality agencies and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify and address impaired water bodies through voluntary conservation. NRCS provides targeted funding for financial and technical assistance in small watersheds most in need and where farmers can use conservation practices to make a difference.



NWQI funds 4 Types of Projects



- 1) Watershed assessments called “Planning Phase Proposals” for watersheds with an impaired waterbody
- 2) Implementation Phase projects for on-the-ground conservation practices to help treat water quality impaired streams.

- 3) Source Water Protection assessments or “Planning Phase Proposals” to protect groundwater or surface water sources of drinking water
- 4) Implementation Phase projects for on-the-ground conservation practices to treat Source Water Protection areas



Watershed Selection Considerations (NHQ)



- Sufficient technical capacity and producer interest to warrant a long-term investment?
- Does a network of partnering agencies already exist?
- Sufficient density of producers to provide the expected water quality improvement within the watershed?
- Can partners conduct monitoring to track the change in water quality attributed to NWQI practices?



Oregon's NWQI Project Prioritization Criteria

- ✓ Willing watershed partners with capacity
- ✓ Substantial number of willing landowners/producers within sensitive areas
- ✓ Completed Source Water Assessment or Plan
- ✓ Existing monitoring data (to establish baseline)
- ✓ Project would address nutrients, sediment, pathogens, pesticides
- ✓ Harmful Algal Bloom concern in source area
- ✓ Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list for not meeting water quality standards
- ✓ Critical habitat for salmon, steelhead or bull trout
- ✓ Socioeconomic/Environmental Justice issues
- ✓ Located in/near agency focus area (i.e. CIS, ODA Strategic Implementation or Focus area, Pesticide Stewardship Partnership area, or groundwater management area)



NWQI Watershed Assessments (Planning Phase)

Prior to requesting NWQI funding for on-the-ground projects, a *completed assessment is required.*

The assessment can be funded with NWQI as a *Planning Phase* project or can be an existing plan.

- ✓ Helps to identify critical source areas needing treatment
- ✓ Meets EPA/NRCS agreed upon minimum assessment requirements (see assessment template)
- ✓ Identifies conservation systems amenable to producers
- ✓ The assessment includes treatments needed at the field level



Source Water Protection in the 2018 Farm Bill

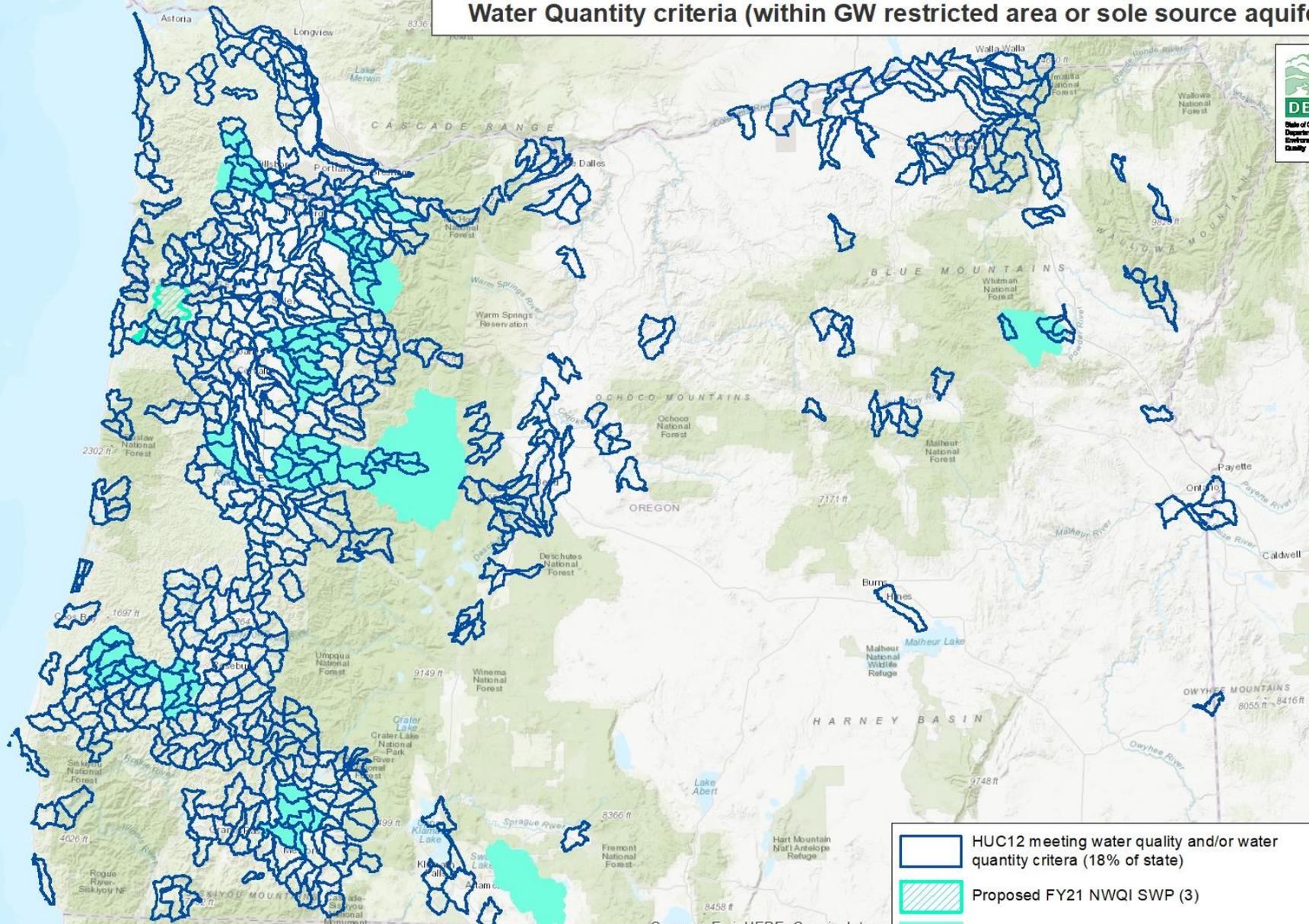
Section 1244(n): Source Water Protection Through Targeting of Agricultural Practices

NRCS shall encourage the protection of drinking water sources through the following methods:

- Identify local priority areas for drinking water protection in each state
 - In collaboration with State Technical Committees and community water systems
 - May address water quality or quantity concerns
- Provide increased incentives for practices that relate to water quality and quantity and protect drinking water sources while also benefitting producers.
- Dedicate at least 10% of the total funds available for conservation programs (with the exception of the Conservation Reserve Program), each year beginning in FY 2019 through FY 2023, to be used for source water protection.



HUC12 meeting; Water Quality criteria (HUC12 with > 3% of DWSA made up of eligible lands and > 4% of HUC12 in a DWSA) and/or Water Quantity criteria (within GW restricted area or sole source aquifer)



	HUC12 meeting water quality and/or water quantity criteria (18% of state)
	Proposed FY21 NWQI SWP (3)
	Current NWQI SWP projects

Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, contributors, and the GIS User Community

Conservation Innovation Grants



Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) is a competitive program that supports the development of new tools, approaches, practices, and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands.

- **National CIG**
 - FY21 Water related priorities
 - Improving nutrient management adoption to meet watershed water quality goals
 - Innovative strategies to improve water resources and resilience of ag producers
- **State CIG**
- **On-Farm Trials**
 - Application deadline June 21, 2021

Applying for Conservation Innovation Grant funding

- National On-Farm Trials: Funding announcement is open now through June 21, 2021 at www.grants.gov (USDA-NRCS-NHQ-CIG-21-NOFO0001094).
 - Priorities for FY 2021 are irrigation management technologies, climate smart agriculture solutions, management technologies and strategies, and soil health demonstration trials.
 - Proposals will be accepted from the following eligible entities: private entities whose primary business is agriculture; non-governmental organizations with experience working with agricultural producers; and non-federal government agencies.
- National CIG Classic: Funding opportunities are available each year.
- Oregon State CIG: Funding announcement is open now through May 7, 2021 at www.grants.gov (USDA-NRCS-OR-CIG-21-NOFO0001083).
 - Successful proposals will demonstrate the use of innovative technologies or approaches to address energy, air quality and atmospheric change, water quality or quantity, plant health and vigor, soil quality, or wildlife habitat resource concerns in Oregon.
 - See the NOF for a full list of eligible entities.





Regional Conservation Partnership Program

The RCPP promotes coordination of NRCS conservation activities with partners that offer value-added contributions to expand our collective ability to address on-farm, watershed, and regional natural resource concerns.

- RCPP provides \$300 million annually to landowners and ag producers to enter into RCPP contracts and RCPP easements.
- Enhanced Alternative Funding Arrangement provision—NRCS may award up to 15 AFA projects, which are more grant-like and rely more on partner capacity to implement conservation activities.
- Two funding pools - partners must apply to either the Critical Conservation Area (CCA) or State/Multistate funding pool.
- Emphasis on project outcomes—all RCPP projects must now develop and report on their environmental outcomes.
- Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to work with local NRCS staff during the development of a proposal.
- For more information about RCPP or how to apply, go to <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/rcpp/>

Applying for Regional Conservation Partnership Program funding

- RCPP Classic: Funding announcement will be made later in FY 2021.
- RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements: Funding announcement open now through May 28, 2021. Information about the opportunity is available at www.grants.gov (USDA-NRCS-NHQ-RCPPAFA-21-NOFO0001096).
 - Proposals that address climate smart agriculture and forestry are encouraged, including carbon markets and new technologies. Proposals that address conservation needs of urban farmers are also encouraged.
 - Eligible lead partners include: agricultural or silvicultural producer groups; units of state or local government; Tribes; irrigation districts, water districts, or other organizations with specific water delivery authority to ag producers; municipal water or wastewater treatment entities; SWCDs; etc. See the NOF on www.grants.gov for the full list of eligible entities.
 - Proposals must be submitted through the NRCS Programs Portal at <https://nrcs-sites.secure.force.com>.



PL-566: Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention

- The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (aka PL-566) provides technical and financial assistance to public entities for planning and implementation of projects that:
 - protect watersheds; mitigate floods; improve water quality; reduce soil erosion; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; and create opportunities for hydroelectric power production.
- Project sponsors provide a portion of the funding and have commitments throughout the process and after implementation.
- PL-566 funding is available for: planning and implementation of large projects (<250,000 acres). Watershed plans must be authorized by the Chief of NRCS prior to being eligible for implementation funding.
- Contact Gary Diridoni, Assistant State Conservationist for Watershed Resources and Planning at 503-414-3092 or gary.diridoni@usda.gov for additional information.



Oregon NRCS Contacts

NRCS Field Offices: Go to

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/or/contact/local/> and select your county

NRCS Basin Staff: Go to

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/or/contact/local/> and scroll to the bottom of the page

NRCS Programs: Catherine Magee, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs; catherine.magee@usda.gov or 503-414-3235

EQIP, NWQI, and CIG: Amy Fischer, Acting EQIP Program Manager; amy.fischer@usda.gov or 503-414-3292

RCPP: Tom Miewald, RCPP Coordinator; tom.miewald@usda.gov or 503-414-3242

Science & Technology: Amanda Moore, State Resource Conservationist; amanda.moore@usda.gov or 503-414-3216



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Questions?

Karma Anderson, Team Leader, National Water Quality and Quantity Team, NRCS, karma.Anderson@usda.gov or 503-273-2431

Amanda Moore, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS Oregon, amanda.moore@usda.gov or 503-414-3216



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